



Lower Hutt City Summit Detailed Insights Report



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At our inaugural Lower Hutt City Summit, held on 18 September 2024, we asked members of our communities to share their thoughts on what matters most to them; what they're grateful for in Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt, what we could do better and what we want to leave for future generations.

In this document we've pulled out the key values and comments on major topics to help guide us as we plan for what the next 30 years will look like for our city.

Feedback shows that our people care deeply about the future of Lower Hutt and a clear call to move beyond discussions and start taking concrete steps.

The valuable views of our residents received at the summit is our first step in the development of a city strategy: **Tō Tātou Tāone 2055 Our City 2055**, a document that will set goals and identify plans to guide our city into the future.

Values

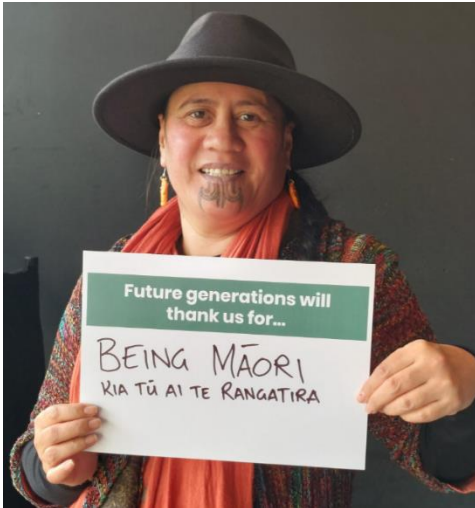
Based on everyone's comments, a few clear values stood out:

- **Sustainability and resilience**
A focus on looking after our environment and making decisions that will keep Lower Hutt clean, green and responsive to future challenges.
- **Kotahitanga - unity**
The importance of coming together, supporting each other, and building strong, connected communities.
- **Cultural integrity and respect**
Celebrating our indigenous Te Ao Māori perspectives and honouring Te Tiriti is essential for effective decision-making and building strong resilient communities.
- **Intergenerational responsibility**
A shared belief that we have a duty to safeguard the city for future generations. Both as individuals and as communities we can to make positive changes happen.
- **Equity**
Ensuring everyone has fair and just opportunities, regardless of who they are or where they come from.
- **Courageous leadership**
The need for decisive leaders who will make bold choices that think ahead and prepare Lower Hutt for what's to come.

Major topics

Iwi/Māori

Many people were proud of the actions taken in the past to establish local marae, and Māori education and services:



"Establishing the Waiwhetū marae."

"First Kōhanga Reo established in Wainuiomata."

"Kura kaupapa movement."

They were also thankful for the protection of local taonga like Nuku Tewhatewha, local pūrākau (legends), spaces and places of significance.

Some people were concerned that te reo Māori and tikanga Māori may not be valued in the future. Suggestions for a brighter future included increasing the use of te reo Māori, and raising

knowledge of te ao Māori, restoring original Māori names and changing the city's name to Te Awa Kairangi (ki Tai):

"Te reo Māori compulsory at high school."

"Big sign saying, "Welcome to Te Awa Kairangi."

There were also comments to celebrate Lower Hutt's unique Māori heritage, recognise Māori sights of significance, and see "pūrākau throughout the city in the form of artwork displayed along the river". In his keynote address, the Chief Executive of Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika, Kara Puketapu-Dentice stated:

"We must also ensure that the vibrancy of te reo Māori and our culture is not just preserved but thrives. Our future lies in cultural revitalisation. We must see our culture in every corner of our city—through public art, bilingual signage, and community engagement – everything."

The importance of "Tiriti based practice and approach" was noted by many people, with calls for Māori voices to be valued, support for Māori wards, and more co-governance with Māori leading and being actively a part of change.

"The opportunity for Mana Whenua and Tangata Tiriti to collaborate living in a spirit of partnership that is genuine."

Business/economy

When reflecting on the past, people were grateful for Lower Hutt businesses and industry which provided employment and helped grow the population:

"Had the car industry that grew the population."

"Thankful for the past businesses in Hutt Valley – ongoing opportunities."

"Factories in Petone, Seaview."

People appreciated business developments such as shopping centres, high street development and hotel development.

Several commented on the importance of science, technology and research facilities. Suggestions for the future included a deep tech hub, on the back of CRIs, Gracefield, manufacturing hub, and a research centre of excellence. Also, a Science Museum and STEM technology hub for young people.

There was hope that in the future *"we are known for our city's innovation,"* and a *"connected community of entrepreneurs that turn opportunities into jobs."* The importance of networks for collaboration and innovation was mentioned, and *"business and community working in tandem."*

In his opening address, Mayor Barry spoke about Te Wai Takamori o Te Awa Kairangi – RiverLink, as *"a chance to turn our city into a space where community, culture and commerce thrive in harmony."* Other participants also noted their hopes for a *"thriving RiverLink district,"* that is a destination location, and *"successful magnet"* for people.

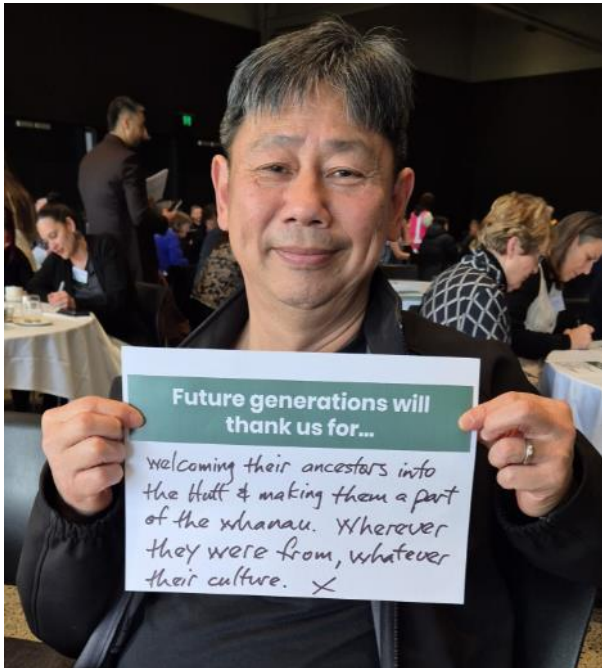
There were concerns about the future of High Street and that small businesses would close if they were not supported locally. Suggestions included easing up consenting processes and attracting more businesses to invest in Lower Hutt.

Many people commented on the importance of local employment opportunities, particularly for young people. There was a concern about future population decline, with people heading overseas (mainly Australia), and unemployment. There were suggestions for a 'living wage' city, and more highly paid jobs.



Community

There were many comments about being proud of 'our place and people':
"staying positive about how awesome Hutt City is to live and work." Some people



suggested building the city's distinctive identity, such as through a 'Te Awa Kairangi' brand.

The importance of "our history represented for the future," was a key theme, including Lower Hutt's unique Māori heritage.

Many highlighted the importance of creating spaces where everyone feels welcome, whether it's through community events, cultural celebrations, or support groups.

As a location that provided a home for new migrants to New Zealand,

establishing cultural groups was important to maintain language and culture. For Pacific communities, establishing communal ties was important.

"I want to see a city that reflects the vibrant and diverse makeup of the people that live here. My hope is that we see our differences celebrated, every day – where we can hear our unique languages, through music and participate in our cultures in different ways..." Huliana Whonu Fanua

Inclusive communities that celebrated diversity and valued all people was a priority for many:

"Building inclusive communities that celebrate diversity in gender, sex and sexuality."

"Remembering we are a diverse culture both with ethnicities and disabilities."

Some expressed concern about racism and the community divided between "haves and have nots". There was also concern about people and communities isolated, loss of intergeneration connection and disconnected families.

Strong community connections and kotahitanga was important to many people:

"Strong neighbourhoods where people look after each other."

"We must be connected – united – live kotahitanga!"

Young people

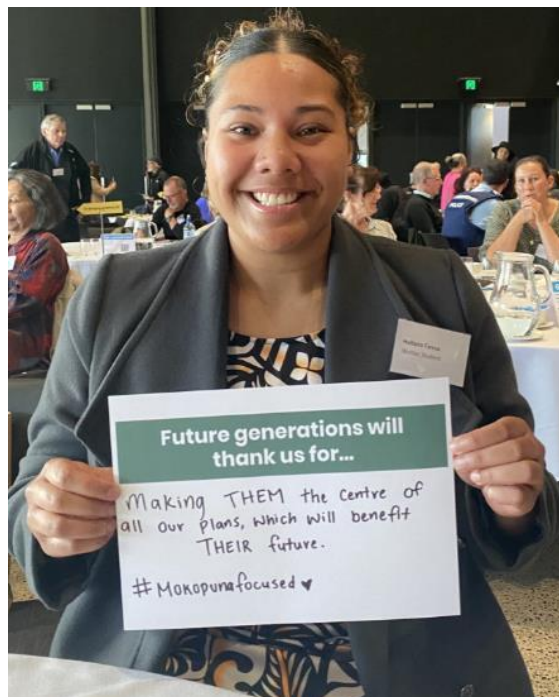
“Our goal is to empower our young people to embrace their heritage, actively participate in shaping our city and seek support for their mental well-being. Our youth are the heart of our future, and it’s crucial that we invest in their growth and development.” Huliana Whonu Fanua

There were concerns for a future where rangatahi did not feel valued, and calls for a “youth friendly city” building on existing:

- Public libraries “great for students!”
- Spaces like Naenae Boxing academy—building stronger and resilient youth.

There were also suggestions for the future:

- affordable entertainment spaces
- Youth Council
- spaces for young people to be creative
- playgrounds like Avalon Park
- mental health education campaigns to young people, parents and educators
- places for youth to hang out
- youth centres, support groups, peer mentorship programmes
- STEM technology hub
- *“Creating a safe place for our children to be outdoors.”*



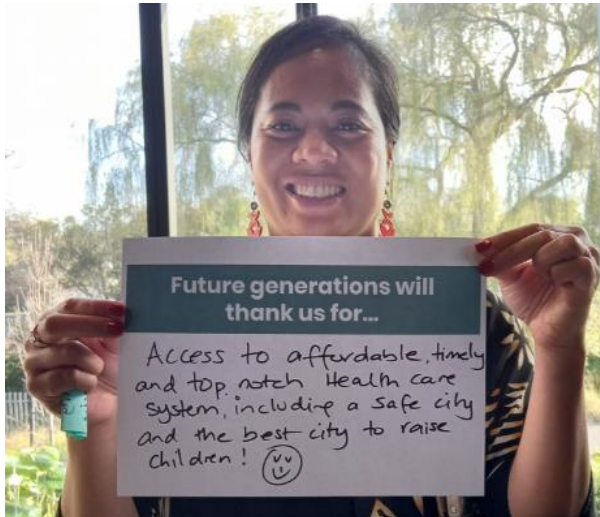
Older people

Some people mentioned the importance of “*older people living a great life safely at home,*” either on their own or with whānau (intergenerational living). Enabling connections between different generations was mentioned, such as daycare/rest home interactions.

There was concern about elderly people living in poverty in the future, and the need for “a fully accessible city.”

Health

People appreciated local health facilities and services, including Hutt Hospital and Te Omanga Hospice.



There was a comment about a future “collapse in health care – we’re already nearly there,” but also hope for future:

“Access to affordable, timely and top notch healthcare system.”

“Affordable healthcare for all.”

“Affordable dental care.”

There were suggestions for a ‘baby hospital’, ‘culturally appropriate services’, and ‘community preparedness’ for infectious disease outbreaks.

While some commented that the current future path would lead to ‘unhealthy families’ and ‘unhealthy generations’, a brighter future would include ‘healthy life’ and ‘active living.’

Some people were concerned about future escalating mental health issues and rates of suicide, and expressed hope for better support for mental wellbeing.

“We need to normalise having open conversations about mental health, what it is, and how we can deal with it together.”

Food security was also noted, with some concerned about “more whānau going hungry”, with hope for a brighter future:

“Everyone would be able to feed themselves and their whānau.”

“TIME and MONEY to grow or access healthy kai.”

Housing

Lower Hutt's proud history in state housing was recognised, including building the first state house in the country, providing state houses for families, and an ongoing role in social housing.

There were concerns about the cost of housing and several people noted the importance of affordable housing:

"Home prices need to come down or next generations will have to move away from the Hutt."

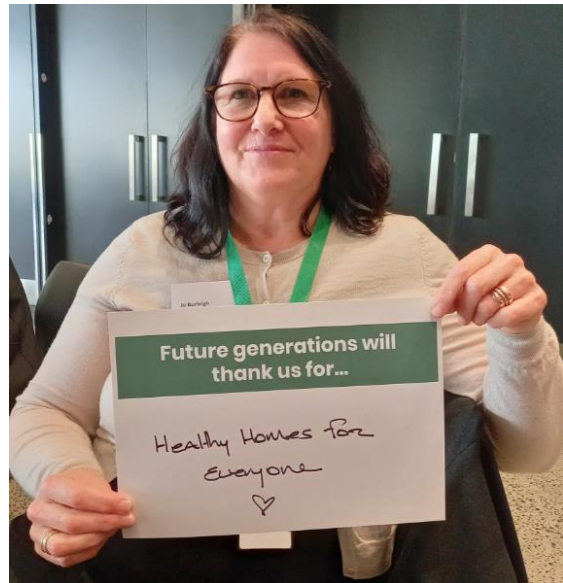
People also commented on the risk of more homelessness in the future and unmet housing need.

Hopes for the future included affordable housing, ending homelessness, and improving the quality of houses.

"Everyone is housed in a safe, warm house."

"Homes for all."

There were differing views on whether in-fill housing should be stopped or increased. Some appreciated the early expansion of housing, opening up land in Maungaraki and enabling housing density. While others expressed concern about urban sprawl, and *"CBD intensification, building sub-standard housing with no car parks."*



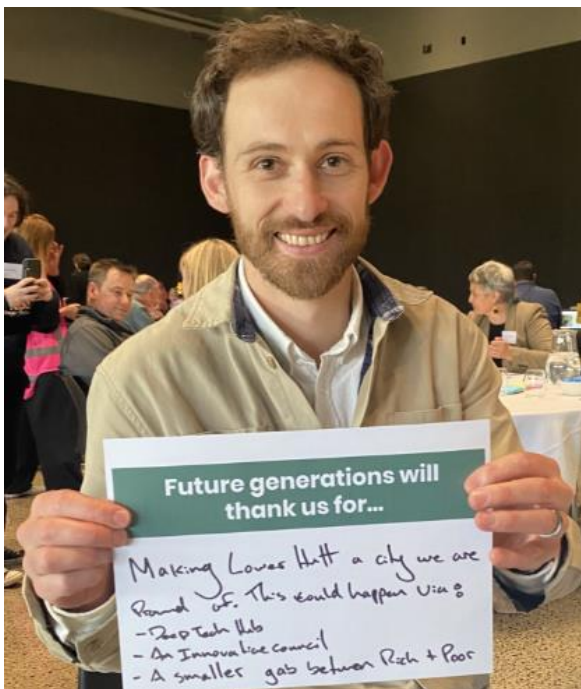
Socio-economic disparity

One of the main concerns expressed by people at the Summit was that our current path would lead to future inequalities and a larger gap between the rich and poor:

"More poverty - whānau are struggling with interest rates, council rates, cost of living, bills, etc."

"Divided communities of haves and have nots."

"More elderly and disabled people in poverty."



It was highlighted that we have a need for robust social services, and better access to quality healthcare and support networks. It is clear we want a city that is committed to a positive, nurturing environment who care about their community.

"Equitable sharing of resources."

"People can get help when they need it."

"Wrap around support available quickly when people are struggling."

Education

People valued quality education in Lower Hutt, including early childhood education such as Te Kōhanga Reo, playcentre and Aoga Amata, schools and tertiary education institutions such as WelTec.

There were comments about future higher dropout rates and negative attitudes to school, and the need for stable, less stressful education.

Suggested new learning for the future included:

- schooling that meets 'all learning styles'
- sign language (schools)
- kaitiaki programmes (schools)
- local history (schools)
- tikanga (schools)
- free classes for basic sewing skills.



Several people commented on the value of Māori medium education, including Te Kōhanga Reo and kura kaupapa and wanted to see more support for Māori education in the future:

"...tamariki leaving kura kaupapa and have job opportunities that value the learnings and teachings they have received."

There was strong support for vocational education and the connection between higher education and local job opportunities:

"Improved local tertiary options to match the regional infrastructure strategies."

"Tertiary education (based here) that is relevant and meaningful to the Hutt."

Safety

When considering a brighter future for Lower Hutt, quite a few people commented on *"The Hutt being safer"*: 'safer streets', 'safe shopping areas' and 'no crime', and a *"safe haven for rangatahi"*:

"Kids can safely visit their friends or visit the local shops without their parents."



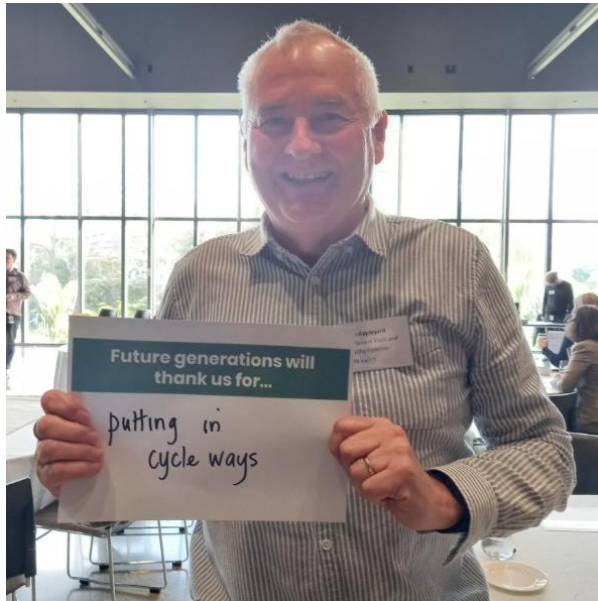
There was concern about family violence on the rise in the future, with no support. It was hoped there would be more future safe and secure housing, *"safe houses for women's refuge"* and Lower Hutt would be:

"A safe city and the best city to raise children!"

"Ensuring that Lower Hutt is a safe and vibrant place to raise a family."

Buildings and infrastructure

Many people were thankful for the buildings and infrastructure which make Lower Hutt the city it is today: The Dowse, the heritage precinct, swimming pools, hospital, schools and churches. Also, city infrastructure including the landfill, communications network, street lighting, roads and rail corridor.



Water infrastructure

Concern was voiced about failing pipes, water shortages, unaffordable basic infrastructure and a lack of long-term infrastructure planning, which would *“not support possible population growth.”*

However, there was also optimism *“those will be improved and we’ll have a functioning water supply (with fewer leaks)”* and there would be a waste system that *“provides us with swimmable, drinkable waterways.”*

Transport

There was concern about future “traffic gridlock”, and “increased traffic flows and jams.”

The importance of cycleways, shared paths and pedestrian areas was mentioned by many people:

“Streets used by people as in Covid.”

“A city that prioritises people – not cars!!!”

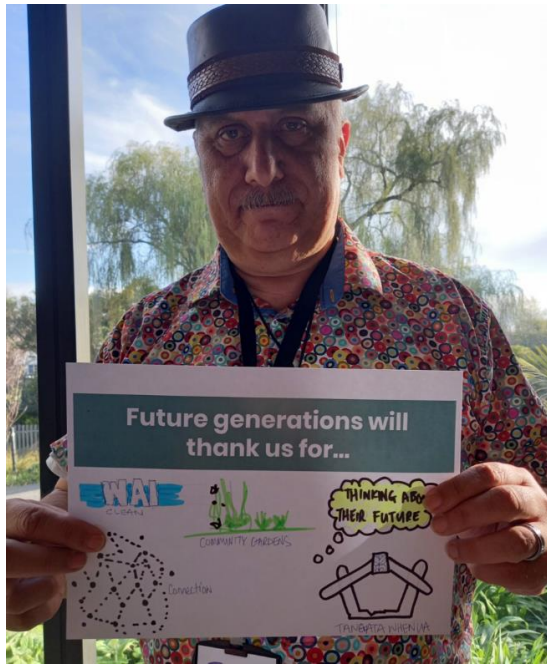
“More children are cycling than cars on the road.”

There were comments about “a fully accessible city”, including wide streets and paths for people with mobility issues, and safe streets for disabled.

Suggestions for public transport included ‘extensive, door-to-door,’ more integrated public transport, and active modes, free city hop bus, free baby/mother transport, and improved transport connections – especially across the Valley and to Porirua.

Sports, arts and recreation

People reflected on the many sports grounds, sports and recreational clubs, strong sporting community and sporting successes of the city. There was pride in places like Walter Nash stadium, Fraser Park, and swimming pools.



Suggestions for the future of sport included:

"Sports options for all generations."

"Phoenix homes games in the Hutt."

"Indoor sports complex in Wainuiomata"

"..getting rangatahi to sports clubs."

There was also appreciation for the city's visual art and performing arts spaces, such as Hutt Art Centre, TLC Art School, The Dowse and Little Theatre, with a future hope for *"live music everywhere"* and *"local artists at vibrant venues with full audiences."*

Some people suggested *"public art that shows our history and uplifts us"*, and *"art built into infrastructure."*

Many people valued local events such as the Living in Colour PRIDE event, Hutfest, Multifest, Riverbank market, and Hutt Valley Sports Awards, which brought diverse communities together.

There were many comments about the importance of Lower Hutt's green spaces: community gardens, parks and reserves such as Riddiford gardens, Te Whiti reserve, dog parks and the river reserve. People supported *"space to grow kai"*, public fruit trees and maintaining nature trails and hikes.

Environment

A lot of people voiced their appreciation of past environmental actions:

"Looking after our whenua."

"Planted many street trees that we are enjoying today."

People valued our coast and rivers: Te Awa Kairangi, Wainuiomata river, Waiwhetū stream, and access to freshwater, including 'Dowse' artesian water. However, there was concern about the potential future of water:

"Awa and streams will become more polluted."

"Water we can't collect kai from."

"Scarcity of drinking water."

Many people prioritised a future where:

"Our awa is clean and accessible."

"An awa I can swim in with mokopuna."

"We have moved away from using the awa to treat our waste."

There was a focus on protecting and restoring biodiversity, including more native plants, and wildlife:

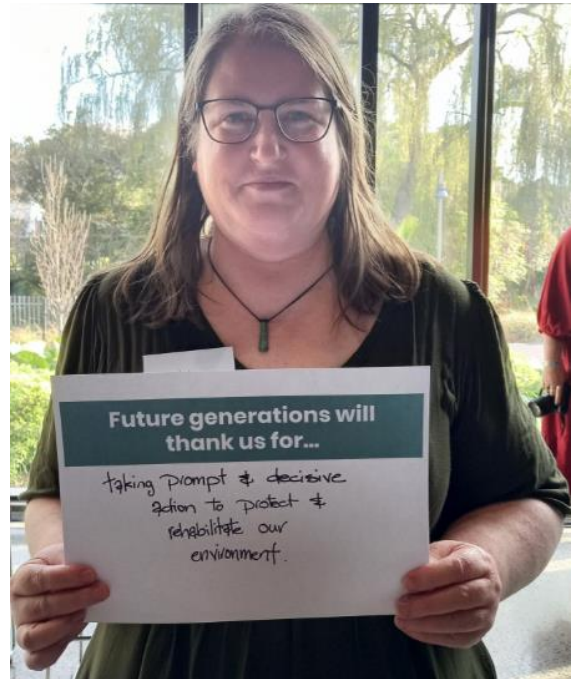
"Kiwi, kōkako, tīeke, kākāpō etc. thriving in the wild."

"Kākā, bring back parrots to the Hutt."

Many people mentioned maintaining our green spaces, the importance of parks and reserves, better recycling, and taking action on climate change. The need to care for our natural surroundings now was emphasized, so that future generations can enjoy them too.

There were also comments about the importance of "connection to the land and natural environment", and hope for a future where "environmental sustainability is incorporated into everything".

"Elevating the wellness of our whenua leads to the elevated wellness of the people".



Climate Change

There was hope for a future *“community that is conscious of climate change and what can be done to adapt and mitigate.”*

Reducing emissions

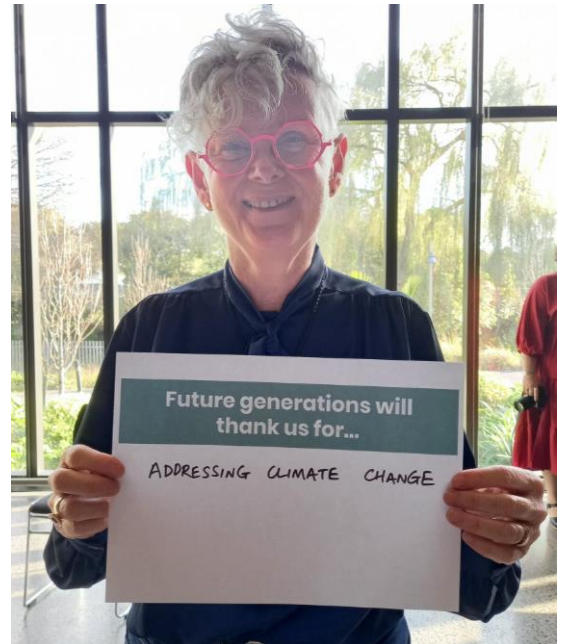
Comments included:

“being courageous and getting to carbon zero ASAP!!!”

“reducing CO2 emissions to zero”.

Suggestions for how to reduce emissions included more local solar power production and resilient energy generation: *“solar panels everywhere”* and more wind power.

Many people supported cycleways and improving public transport. Others expressed hope for future “closed loop waste management”, effective recycling and composting.



Impact of the changing climate

Several people commented that we will end up *“under water”* and *“under the sea”* if we ‘keep going the way we are now’. With Pito One and Eastbourne particularly affected by sea level rise. There was concern about more flooding, drought/dry summers and water shortages.

There was hope for:

“Resilience to climate, weather and geological events, so people are fundamentally safe.”

“Community preparedness in an outbreak (public health) or emergency (natural disasters)”.

Suggestions included ‘sponge city’, development/consents to provide information about the land and risks, and building resilience such as locally grown kai, and local power generation.

Taking action for future generations

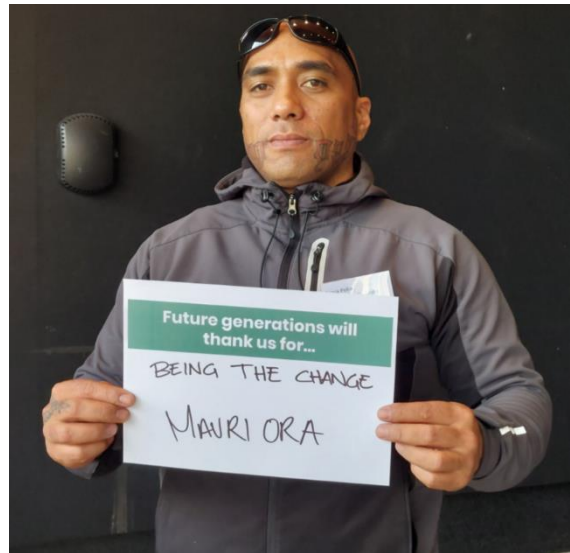
There was clear support for thinking ahead and making decisions that will help future generations. Keynote speaker Girol Karacaoglu spoke about the importance of intergenerational wellbeing, and giving individuals, families, whanau and communities the opportunities to pursue and enjoy the very diverse lives they value. This applies both to people today, and to future generations.

Participants talked about planning our city's growth carefully, investing in sustainable infrastructure, and ensuring our actions today set up a positive future:

"planning for 100 years"

"Future planning not short term fixes."

A big theme across all responses was the need to act now. People felt it was important to move beyond talking about problems and start doing something about them: *"not waiting for a crisis to act"* and *"starting the change"*.



"Caring enough to improve Hutt City for the benefit of them and their whānau."

"We listened to the next generation...and we acted today."

There were some comments about courageous decision-making, being bold, provocative, brave and "taking some risks" in *"implementing the change we need."*

"I'm optimistic for the future. We have a great awareness and a city of capable people who want to enact change and collaborate. There are challenges, but the kōrero has begun!"

Next Steps

The feedback from the City Summit tells us that the people of Lower Hutt are passionate, forward-thinking, and deeply committed to making our city a better place.

By working together and staying focused on our shared values, we can create a city that future generations will be proud of.

Now it's time to use these insights and turn them into action! We're taking next steps to create a City Leadership Group who will champion a case for change for Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt and drive the creation and delivery of city strategy outcomes.

Early in the new year we will develop and test key priorities and consult further with the community before finalising the City Strategy for endorsement later in 2025.

If you, your business, or organisation are interested in being involved in supporting the development of our City Strategy, please let us know by emailing haveyoursay@huttcity.govt.nz.

